

## TOBACCO PREVENTION POLICIES

School policies that restrict tobacco use on school property are a key component of comprehensive school health plans and contribute to the overall effectiveness of efforts to prevent youth tobacco use. National agencies provide a wealth of information about the assessment, development, implementation and surveillance of tobacco-free policies. The agencies include the American Lung Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Association of State Boards of Education. This section aims to summarize the resources available and provide examples for use in school settings.

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) encourages a comprehensive approach to preventing youth tobacco use. NASBE lists the following key elements of a comprehensive policy<sup>1</sup>:

- prohibiting all tobacco use and promotion on school property, in school vehicles, and at all school events on or off campus;
- requiring effective tobacco-use prevention education; and
- facilitating of student and staff access to tobacco-use cessation programs rather than solely relying on punitive sanctions for tobacco use at school.

To assist schools throughout the United States, NASBE has developed *Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn: A School Health Policy Guide*. Chapter Eight of this resource focuses on policies to prevent tobacco use. The South Dakota Department of Health has included a copy of Chapter Eight with this Toolkit. To order additional copies of this guide visit: [www.nasbe.org](http://www.nasbe.org).

Many organizations have guidelines similar to NASBE. For example, the American Lung Association (ALA) states that policies to prevent tobacco use among young people should include<sup>2</sup>:

- Tobacco education in schools,
- Restrictions on tobacco advertising and promotions,
- A complete ban on smoking by anyone on school grounds,
- No sale of tobacco products to minors and
- Tax increases on tobacco products so young people cannot afford them.

According to the ALA, the following characteristics make model school smoking policies effective<sup>2</sup>:

- Smoking on school grounds, in school buildings, on school buses, and at school-sponsored events is prohibited for students, school personnel, and visitors.
- Schools enforce the policy and consistently administer penalties for violations.
- Disciplinary measures for non-compliance with policy are educational as well as punitive.
- Policy development includes active collaboration with teachers, students, and parent groups to give direction and build support for tobacco-free schools.
- All components of a school's smoking policy, including consequences for violations, are communicated in written and oral form to students, staff, and visitors.
- District-wide educational programs addressing the prevention of tobacco use are initiated or expanded as part of the policy implementation process.

- Smoking cessation programs or other incentives are developed for students, school personnel, and, if possible, the public.
- Programs are periodically evaluated to provide information on acceptance and effectiveness of policy.
- Schools do not accept any contributions from the tobacco industry, including direct financial support and materials paid for or produced by or for the tobacco industry.
- Procedures for communicating the policy to students, all school staff, parents or families, visitors, and the community.
- Provisions for enforcing the policy.

The guidelines and resources provided by the NASBE, ALA, and the CDC make it evident that a comprehensive approach to preventing tobacco use is most effective. This information may be utilized to begin or strengthen tobacco prevention efforts in your school and/or community.

In the Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Tobacco Use and Addiction, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the development and enforcement of a school policy on tobacco use<sup>3</sup>. The recommendation states that a school policy on tobacco use must be consistent with state and local laws and should include the following elements<sup>3</sup>:

- An explanation of the rationale for preventing tobacco use (i.e., tobacco is the leading cause of death, disease, and disability).
- Prohibitions against tobacco use by students, all school staff, parents and visitors on school property, in school vehicles, and at school-sponsored functions away from school property.
- Prohibitions against tobacco advertising in school buildings, at school functions, and in school publications.
- A requirement that all students receive instruction on avoiding tobacco use.
- Provisions for students and all school staff to have access to programs to help them quit using tobacco.

## South Dakota QuitLine

Tobacco-free policies are effective in encouraging smokers to think about cessation. Policies also support smokers who have already quit. Communities can provide cessation information and education before and during policy implementation. In addition, communities can track use of local cessation programs following implementation.

The South Dakota Department of Health recognizes that cessation plays a key role in comprehensive tobacco prevention efforts. The South Dakota QuitLine offers services to residents throughout the state who are aiming to quit using tobacco. The QuitLine serves individuals that are thirteen years of age or older. Here's how the South Dakota QuitLine can help. Individuals who use the service will have access to:

- free professional advice,
- free quitting tobacco workbooks and materials,
- assistance with nicotine withdrawal medication, and
- referral to local cessation services.

Call the toll-free South Dakota QuitLine at 1-866-SD-Quits (1-866-737-8487) or visit online at: [www.doh.sd.gov/tobacco](http://www.doh.sd.gov/tobacco).



## Tobacco Prevention Policy Case Study

Middletown School District decided to review their tobacco policy in the late 1980s. At that time, a smoking lounge was available for faculty and other school staff. Students were not allowed to smoke in school buildings, but students were allowed

to congregate near the doors to smoke outdoors between classes. Complaints from some students suggested that although smoking was not allowed in district schools, this policy was not enforced in many lavatories at the high school.

A school tobacco use policy committee was formed that included administrators, teachers, other school staff, students and parents. Community representatives familiar with tobacco control policy were also invited to attend meetings and help the school develop their policy. This committee reviewed information on the benefits of smoke-free policies, strategies for informing staff, students, and visitors about smoke-free policies, and approaches to effectively implementing these policies. After a few months of material review and discussion the committee drafted a smoke-free policy for the school district and proposed an enactment date six months following board approval. This lag time was designed to give school staff time to plan implementation strategies, distribute information about the policy to staff, students, and parents as well as allow all people impacted by the policy to understand the implications of the policy. Initially, some staff who smoked expressed concerns that the policy would be an undue hardship on them. A small number of staff were concerned that the policy would be difficult to enforce. Both concerns were addressed in educational materials about the policy that were prepared and distributed six months before the policy went into effect. The next school year, the smoke-free policy was implemented with high levels of compliance and overall support. Staff training was provided at the beginning of the school year and ongoing refresher and update sessions are offered annually. After a few years, the policy was expanded to include district owned vehicles as well as buildings.